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## The principal's role in school climate

Heather Jeannine Williams

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California State University  
San Bernardino

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN  
SCHOOL CLIMATE

A Project Submitted to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the  
Degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Education : Administration Option

By

Heather Jeannine Williams  
San Bernardino, California

1991

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# THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN SCHOOL CLIMATE

Heather Jeannine Williams  
California State University, San Bernardino, 1991

## Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to ascertain the role of the elementary school principal in creating and maintaining a positive school climate. An examination of current research was conducted to determine the principal's areas of responsibility as related to school climate.

Principals have always been recognized as the identified leader of a school site. The writer of this project has hypothesized that the individual in the position of principal can have a significant impact on the climate of the school.

## Procedure

The role of the principal in school climate was evaluated by examining the current research on school climate, responsibilities of principals, effective elementary principals, leadership styles, and climate assessment tools. The information collected in each

of the areas was then compared to ascertain if any correlation existed between the principal's behavior and the climate of the school. The collected information was also reviewed to determine if specific behaviors or actions of the principals had an impact on the climate. Behaviors and actions examined included: climate assessment, knowledge of climate, community relations, staff development, leadership styles, and climate improvement plans. Current literature was also reviewed to determine whether or not a principal has a significant impact on school climate.

### Results

The results of this project indicated that current research shows a correlation between a principal's behavior and a positive school climate. Specific behaviors of principals have been identified as conducive to building a positive school climate. There are specific plans and suggestions available for principals interested in improving the school climate.

### Conclusions and Implications

This writer found a positive correlation between principal behavior and school climate improvement. If schools are to educate children in a safe, supportive atmosphere with an emphasis on learning, principals need

to keep the goal of a positive school climate in the forefront of their decisions and actions. This is important if schools are going to continue to meet the ever changing needs of our society.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Education is currently under heavy scrutiny by many publics such as the government, citizens, researchers, students, and even educators themselves. The American society has undergone monumental changes over the last fifty years and has subsequently placed the burden of curing societal ills upon the public school system. However unrealistic this may be, the fact remains that the students who walk through our school house doors today face challenges that students of past generations never encountered. As educators, we must meet the needs of our students and prepare them for the challenges of the future. In light of all the "baggage" such as poverty, single parent families, and drug related births that students bring with them to school, we need to create an environment where they feel safe, are appropriately challenged, and feel they can succeed. We must overcome using "baggage" as an excuse and endeavor to build a positive school climate where academic achievement is a central focus.

School leaders, such as principals, are the catalyst for change and must initiate the move to a positive school climate. According to Lezotte, Miller, Hathaway, Passalacqua, Brookover (1980), "principals represent the



organizational authority of the school, and in that regard, they serve to symbolize what the school stands for, how it will operate, and what is important. In general, they set the educational tone for the school" (p.93). Considering the significant position a principal holds in a school setting, it is imperative for that individual to have a clear understanding of school climate and the factors that effect it.

### Need for the Study

The study of the principal's role in school climate is important for a variety of reasons. First of all, school accountability is on the rise. In California the State Department of Education has published the Quality Criteria Document which spells out what a model school would look like. One criterion in the Quality Criteria Document is school climate. When schools are reviewed by Program Quality Review Teams, they will be held accountable for the school climate. This reason, in and of itself, may motivate some principals to take an interest in school climate. However, an equally important reason why principals should take an interest in school climate is that there is increasing evidence of the links between a positive school climate and student achievement. Bedley (1982) claimed "climate

conditions that surround learning are equally as important as learning" (p.11). Climate is significant to the occurrence of academic learning because it is within a positive school climate that learning flourishes. "A positive school climate is achieved when educators, teachers, and kids are working together to accomplish goals in a setting that is both cognitively stimulating and emotionally warm and supportive" (Bedley, p. 11). Accountability and student achievement are compelling reasons for a principal to be an expert in school climate and the techniques for assuring that a positive climate is present at the school site.

The need for this particular study is to create a reference document for administrators and aspiring administrators. The goals of this project are to: establish a comprehensive understanding of climate, define the principal's significance in climate building and maintenance, compare specific behaviors with their impact on climate, and present research based techniques in creating a positive school climate. This particular study will assist administrators in determining the areas of improvement in their school climate, and the appropriate course of action for climate improvement.

## Chapter 2

### Climate Defined

School leaders, specifically, school principals, are the catalyst for change and must initiate the move toward positive school climate. Lipham (1981) contended that "because principals are the key internal change agents, no change of substantial magnitude can occur in any school without their understanding and support" (p.15). In order for one to initiate such a change, a comprehensive understanding of school climate is essential. School learning climate has been defined by Lezotte et al. as "the norms, beliefs, and attitudes reflected in institutional patterns and behavioral practices that enhance or impede student achievement" (p.4). This is an important point to consider because it claims that the individuals' actions within the organization are a reflection of what they believe as a whole and what they believe about the organization. Owens (1981) further expanded upon this idea in a discussion of Halpin's metaphorical comparison of climate and individuals. Halpin claimed that "personality is to the individual what organizational climate is to the organization" (p.190). Closely related to these definitions of climate is James Keefe's (1989) simple definition of climate as being the group's

perceptions of school characteristics. He also distinguished climate from satisfaction which is an individual's perception. Keefe emphasized that climate does not directly conclude that a school is effective, but climate does predict its potential for effectiveness (p.35).

Another definition of school climate offered by Squires, Hultt, and Segars (1984) described climate as containing three weather conditions: (an emphasis on academics, an orderly environment, and high expectations for success.) Any administrator endeavoring to improve school climate will need to spend much time and energy in these areas. Each of the three weather conditions are also broken down into the roles of the students, teachers, and principal. Bebemeyer (1982) further described climate by quoting Eugene Howard as saying that school climate is the "aggregate of social and cultural conditions which influence individual behavior in the school ---all of the forces to which the individual responds which are present in the school environment" (p.20). Another beneficial description of climate was given by Kelley (1980) when climate was described as "the prevailing or normative conditions, practices and events (formed by the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of those in the school environment) which affect the attainment of satisfaction

and accomplishment" (p.21). Clearly, climate includes a variety of factors and varying audiences which together determine the effectiveness of the educational process.

In addition to having a clear understanding of climate, it is important that a principal have an understanding of various factors of organizational climate. Bedley described twelve facets of organizational climate which can serve as a reference for a principal.

1. Climate is both tangible and measurable.
2. Climate generates behavior.
3. Climate includes the collective perceptions about the organization of all those that work in the organization.
4. Climate, like weather, can change overnight.
5. Human beings are most adaptable. We can adapt ourselves to a number of different environments.
6. Climate, like the weather, is more interesting when it changes.
7. Climate is a set of conditions that surround people carrying out tasks.
8. Climate is fueled by people's emotions.
9. Climate is feeling tones existent in organizations. They are either negative, positive, or neutral.

10. Organizations, like people, have characteristics and personalities which can be felt.
11. What happens to people the night or day before, largely determines what the climate will be the following day.
12. The climate of an organization can have a profound effect on the level of productivity and the satisfaction of the employees (p.7).

In addition to understanding the many facets of the term climate, it is necessary for a school administrator to understand the term culture. The terms climate and culture are often interchanged and misunderstood. Deal (1987) described culture as giving meaning to instructional activity and providing a "symbolic bridge" between action and results. He further delineated culture into facets such as shared values, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, stories, and cultural network. According to Deal, culture is learned (p.145). Firestone and Wilson (1984) included cultural content, symbols, and communication patterns in their description of culture (p.2).

Another definition of culture given by Lambert describes culture as "meaning the set of beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes held by a given set of people during a given

period of time..." (p.54). Like Bedley's facets of school climate, Murdock (1940) developed the following list of cultural elements.

1. Culture is learned.
2. Culture is inculcated.
3. Culture is social.
4. Culture is ideational.
5. Culture is gratifying.
6. Culture is adaptive.
7. Culture is integrative (Bartky, 1956, p.41).

Bartky elaborated on Murdock's list by describing three aspects of culture:

1. Laws, rules, and regulations
2. Traditions, customs, and courtesies,
3. Status and role relationships (p.44).

Bartky further illustrated the meaning of culture when he described one function of culture as being a way "to help people discover what behavior is expected of them and what they may expect of others" (p.42).

With all of the preceeding definitions and descriptions of climate and culture, it is time to assess where the similarities and differences are between the two terms and come to a working understanding of each term. First of all, it is understandable to see why there is some confusion in the meaning of the terms when words such as

norms, beliefs, and attitudes are used to define climate and culture alike. The difference is in the fact that culture is more easily identified and transmitted.

Culture is the group's stated beliefs, where climate is the group's beliefs interpreted through their actions.

Climate and culture have both been identified as something that can be learned. However, one difference is that Bedley (1982) described climate as something tangible and measurable, while Sarason (1971) described culture as "not concrete, tangible, and measurable..." (pp.227-228). It is clear that a school's climate and culture are linked together. Lezotte felt that climate was more specifically concerned with the culture within a building (p.35). In looking at the various definitions of climate and culture, this writer determined that the culture of a school is a broad, unwritten, and often unspoken, set of beliefs, attitudes, and norms; and climate is the by-product of the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors exhibited as a result of the culture. )



### Chapter Three

#### Significance of the Principal

Most educational research conclusively points to the school principal as the key individual in promoting a positive school climate. For example, Lezotte found that "principals represent the organizational authority of the school, and in that regard, they serve to symbolize what the school stands for, how it will operate, and what is important. In general, they set the educational tone for the school" (p.93). Lezotte was quick to point out however, that "principals cannot single-handedly establish and maintain an instructionally effective school learning climate; teachers, parents, and students must share this responsibility while principals must provide the needed leadership. But principals can almost single-handedly impede progress and improvement" (p.96). The principal must assume the leadership role in climate development and actively involve others in the process.

In their review of management techniques, Beare, Caldwell, and Millikan (1989) stated that the "role of leader in cultural development is potentially very powerful and fundamentally very important" (p.200). They named the principal as the leader of cultural

development and stated that:

the best principals embody a paradigm that is consistent with their school, which ennobles it and points to what is, could or should be, and which he or she helps to manifest in concrete ways within the school. It begins to show in the way the school is run, its furnishings, its rewards and punishments, the way its members are organized or controlled, who has power and influence, which members are honoured, which behaviors are remarked upon and so on. All of these things can create the climate within which children learn and which is powerfully pervasive in those learnings (p.19).

Although Beare et al. discussed cultural development, it is clear in their discussion that the principal's role in cultural development effects the school climate.

Rodriguez (1979) further emphasized the significant role of the principal in school climate due to the fact that the instructor believes, as many others do, that a school is only as good as its principal. The principal's words and actions, whether he is aware of the fact or not, are continuously setting the tone for his faculty, staff, students, and community. His body language often speaks louder than his words in setting the learning and working

climate (p.271).

Along the same line of the thought, Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984) stated the "administrative influence on the school language, metaphors, myths, and ritual is a major factor in the determination of the culture which is reproduced in the consciousness of teachers and pupils" (p.272). According to Bebermeyer, "many researchers (Kelley, Valentine, Valenti, Washington, and others) indicate that the principal is the key to school climate improvement and is the person most responsible and accountable for it" (p.7). Research concludes time and time again the importance of the principal to change within the school climate.

Clearly research supports the idea that the principal is the individual responsible for the school climate. The principal communicates through words and actions, the beliefs, attitudes, and values of the school to the students, teachers, other personnel, parents, and the community. So often our society deems a school effective if the principal is effective. The principal is in the key leadership position and is capable of influencing the move toward a positive school climate and excellence. Simply put, "leadership is the hinge upon which school cultures swing" (Holmes, 1989, p.121).

## Chapter Four

### Climate Assessment

Research indicates that "the first step in promoting school climate is to create an awareness of climate and to assess the climate of your school or school district" (Hoyle, English, and Steffy, 1985, p. 12). There are a variety of questionnaires and surveys developed to assist the principal in the process of gathering information for the purpose of climate assessment. It is also possible for the principal to develop a survey suited to his or her individual school needs. Regardless of the method used, it is imperative that the principal assess the current climate of the school before attempting any changes.

Whether the principal uses a research-developed or a personally-designed questionnaire, it is imperative that the principal keeps in mind that school climate improvement is a long term process and cannot be accomplished overnight. Bebermeyer reiterated the necessity of a long term commitment in her discussion of work done by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The Massachusetts Department of Education developed a handbook to be used within its high schools to improve climate. The handbook stressed the long term commitment

by giving a minimum guideline of a two year effort, with two hours a week devoted to climate improvement. During the first year, the principal assembles a school climate team. The school climate team spends the entire first year assessing the climate and developing an improvement plan (p.27). Clearly, one should only jump into implementing various activities for school climate improvement with much forethought, investigation of current conditions, articulation, and deliberation.

Once the principal understands the time and energy commitment involved, s/he can begin selecting the instrument to be used in climate assessment. Bebermeyer proposes some questions for the principal to consider when selecting a school climate assessment instrument.

1. Do you want to measure satisfaction, productivity, or both?
2. Do you have already collected data (student attendance, achievement, etc.) which may be of more use than formal assessment with a school climate instrument?
3. Do you want high-inference ("What does this mean?") or low-inference ("How many?") responses? Low-inference instruments are more prevalent, but substantially less valid in predicting learning outcomes.

4. If you are measuring attitudes, is the instrument multidimensional so that it will reflect affective, cognitive, and behavioral components and take context into account?
5. Have levels of reliability, validity, and concurrent or predictive validity with other measures been established?
6. Can the instrument be completed with the time and energy likely to be available for the assessment process?
7. Can the results be "scored" and interpreted easily, promptly, economically? (p.110)

Bebermeyer discussed one instrument which was presented in ASCD's Improving School Climate: A Staff Development-School Improvement Process. The ASCD process uses two mini-audits which concentrate on the positive elements already present with the intention of building on the school's strengths. The first mini-audit assesses program determinants which include "active learning, individualized performance expectations/varied reward systems, varied learning environments, flexible curriculum, extracurricular activities, appropriate support and structure, and cooperatively determined rules" (p.30). The second mini-audit assesses process determinants and materials determinants. Process

determinants include "problem solving, decision making, working with conflicts, improvement of school goals and planning, effective communications, autonomy with accountability, and effective teaching/learning strategies" (p.30). Materials determinants include "adequate resources, supportive logistical systems, and suitability of school plant and grounds" (p.30).

The mini-audits are to be completed by faculty and any others selected by the school climate team. It was also recommended that an outside team conduct one of the mini-audits. The process that the outside team uses is similar to the process currently used by Program Quality Review Teams in assessing a school's program. The team reviews documentation and conducts observations and interviews. The team then charts their findings and presents them to the faculty who have an opportunity to make additions or corrections. It is then the responsibility of the faculty to make action plans for improvement from the information left by the outside team.

Another climate assessment instrument has been provided by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Keefe discussed this instrument and made it clear that although the task force does not have a

comprehensive assessment tool, what they have developed is the first step for administrators and leadership teams involved in determining the school climate. Keefe pointed out that teachers, students, and parents should be surveyed in order to get an accurate view of the climate. The NASSP instrument uses various criteria to measure the climate which includes: administration, compensation, advancement opportunities, student responsibility and discipline, curriculum and job tasks, coworkers, parents and community, buildings, supplies, maintenance, and communication. Other criteria of school climate identified by NASSP include teacher-student relations, student-peer relations, student values, student academic orientation, student activities, guidance, and instructional management (p.35-43). Although the NASSP climate assessment instrument is not comprehensive, Keefe felt it was an effective tool for measuring school climate.

Hoyle et al. discussed a variety of climate assessment methods. One method noted was the use of observational instruments and techniques. The use of the observational method is based on the "assumption that it is possible to infer feelings or 'affect' by watching the overt behaviors of students, teachers, and administrators in school settings" (p.14). Another



method of climate assesment was labeled classroom interactions. When using classroom interactions the climate assessor focuses on how the teacher influences student behaviors. Hoyle et al. also cited useful questionnaires as a method of climate assessment. The previously discussed ASCD mini-audits and the NASSP climate assessment instrument are such questionnaires.

A fourth method of climate assessment was labeled Nonstandardized and Standardized Self-Report Instruments. Such instruments gather information about a person's perceptions of what is, what was, or what ought to be. Bebermeyer discussed this type of self reporting instrument in her discussion of Frieburg and Buckley's (1981) change model. The first step in this change model requires: "(a) describe in writing the ideal situation given maximum change, (b) describe the situation which exists at present, and (c) measure the dissonance between indicators (a) and (b)" (p.31).

A fifth method Hoyle et al. identified as a climate assessment method was entitled Designing Your Own Questionnaire. This method would be very useful when the principal has addressed the questions presented by Bebermeyer to consider when selecting a climate assessment instrument and found that none of the

available instruments will meet his or her school's needs. The final method of climate assessment presented was Standardized Self-Report Instruments. Examples of Standardized Self-Report Instruments include Profile of a School (POS) by Rensis Likert Associates, the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) by Halpin and Croft, and the Learning Climate Inventory (LCI). Each of these Standardized Self-Report Instruments will be discussed in further detail. Thus far it is clear that the principal has a wide range of climate assessment instruments to choose from when beginning the first steps of school climate improvement.

The Learning Climate Inventory (LCI) assesses the school's effectiveness in five areas: leadership, freedom, evaluation, compliance, and cooperation. Hoyle et al. discussed definitions for the five factors assessed in the LCI. Leadership was defined as "the extent to which the teachers perceive the leadership behaviors of the administrators" (p.23). The definition of freedom was "the extent to which teachers feel free to experiment and determine their own instructional activities in their classrooms" (p.23). Evaluation was simply defined as "the extent to which teachers and students are involved in teacher and administrator evaluation" (p.23). "The extent to which teachers feel

the pressure to conform to the rules of the system" (p.23) was the definition of compliance. Finally cooperation was defined as "the extent to which teachers are supported in their efforts to team-teach and use resource people" (p.23). This instrument can be readily used to identify specific areas of weakness or strength.

Halpin and Croft designed a questionnaire entitled Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ). Owens described the questionnaire as a tool to "elicit from teachers the critical factors that they generally agreed were central to describing the climate of a school" (p.196). The questionnaire is divided into two clusters consisting of four factors each. The first cluster concentrates on the four factors that describe the teachers' perceptions of the teachers as a human group. The first factor within this cluster is intimacy, which is defined as the amount of social cohesiveness within the teachers at the school. The second factor is disengagement, or the amount of involvement and commitment on the part of the teachers to achieving the goals of the school. Esprit, which is simply the apparent morale of the faculty is the third factor. The final factor of this cluster is hindrance, or the extent to which teachers feel their work is impeded by rules and paperwork (p.196).

The second cluster of climate factors was concerned with the teachers collective perceptions of the principal. The first factor in this cluster is labeled thrust and it refers to the hard working example set through the principal's dynamic behavior. The second factor, consideration, is concerned with whether or not the teachers feel the principal treats them with dignity and human concern. Aloofness is the third factor and it deals with the type of social distance the principal maintains. The final factor in this cluster is production emphasis which is designed to gather information about the different ways in which a principal motivates his or her staff to work harder (p.196). Halpin and Croft's Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire was designed to gather information concerning the teachers' perceptions of themselves and of their principal. An argument could be made that such a questionnaire is lacking because it excludes parents and students.

Another Substantive Self-Report Instrument described by Owens was developed by Rensis Likert entitled Profile of a School (POS). Profile of a School (POS) was essentially developed to "measure characteristics of the internal functioning of the organization and to relate those to measures of organizational performance" (p.204).

Organizational performance is determined by such factors as:

1. productivity,
2. rate of absenteeism and turnover.
3. loss through scrap and waste, and
4. quality control (p. 205).

The characteristics of an organization are determined by the following six factors:

1. leadership process,
2. motivational forces,
3. communication processes,
4. decision-making processes,
5. goal-setting processes, and
6. control process (p. 205).

Likert's questionnaire has a different approach than Halpin and Croft's by looking at organizational performance and characteristics rather than teacher's perceptions of themselves and their principal. In light of the different approaches, many of the same factors are assessed in the two questionnaires.

Bedley discussed several ways of assessing school climate that were more informal. First, he suggested that the principal observe everyday interactions at the site such as how people are greeted or how telephone conversations are conducted. Another way to assess the

climate is to have employees periodically fill out "What's Working/What's Not Working" cards and compare the cards filled out at different times of the year. Bedley also suggested asking employees to list four characteristics of people who build a positive school climate. Once they have their list, the employees are to rate themselves as to how well and often they use these characteristics to contribute to a positive school climate. Bedley also discussed the possibility of the principal constructing a survey for his/her site. He described a survey used at Edison High School in Fresno. The survey gathered information in the following ten areas: involvement, relationships, teacher support, curriculum, counseling services, recreation alternatives, physical environment, decision making, conflict resolution, and personal stress (pp. 17-21). Although Bedley's suggestions of assessment methods are more informal, they would be very helpful in gathering desired, specific information.

Assessing school climate is a necessary and crucial initial step in the process of improving school climate. The principal embarking upon this initial step should put much forethought and consideration into what kind of information is desired, which assessment to use, and how s/he will present the subject and process to the staff.

It is also imperative for the administrator to remember that climate assessment is only an initial stage of information gathering and that any real improvement will require further study, time, and effort. Gottfredson and Hollifield (1988) emphasized this point in their statement that "climate assessment often stimulates planning for school improvement, but nothing will happen unless people in the school act on the information over a period of years, not days" (p.68).

## Chapter Five

### Climate Improvement Processes

Once the climate of a school has been assessed and the information collated, the school must act upon the information. Research provides a variety of steps, programs, or plans to use when establishing a climate improvement process. In this chapter various process suggestions will be reviewed and a determination will be made of commonalities as well as the essential elements required in the process.

First of all, Gottfredson and Hollifield presented six simple steps involved in planning what they called school improvement. Step one was to diagnose the climate through an assessment tool. Step two included reviewing the information gathered and then formulating specific goals and objectives. Examining the research on potential programs to use in achieving the specified goals and objectives was step three. After examining the research, the fourth step was to identify any obstacles and possible resources. The fifth step was to make a formal written plan for school (climate) improvement. According to Gottfredson and Hollifield this specifically entails specifying "clearly what resources will be used to overcome obstacles, and who is



responsible for taking what steps by when" (p.69). The final step suggested by Gottfredson and Hollifield was to specify quality control standards. This step was designed to guarantee that the program is not only in place, but is also effective.

Lewis (1987) presented a more detailed school climate improvement process, but he also started with an assessment phase. Lewis' process was designed specifically for building a strong organizational culture, which has important ramifications upon the climate. Similarly to Gottfredson and Hollifield, Lewis' next step involved preparing a philosophy statement which he felt included statements of the school organization's socioeconomic purpose, its mission, its shared values, and its objectives. Following steps included personifying the philosophy and hiring people compatible with the philosophy. Another suggestion was to redesign the orientation program or how people are inducted into the culture. Lewis also felt the principal should heavily publicize the philosophy and reward philosophy compliance. Other suggestions included developing symbolic activities and a special vocabulary to help people "buy into" the established philosophy. Lewis also mentioned the possible need of adapting the physical plant (p.25).

This process was not designed specifically for climate improvement, but lends itself to such improvement efforts.

Hoyle et al. specifically designed a process for promoting a more positive school climate. First of all, they suggested conducting surveys to measure school climate. After the surveys, the next step was to develop long range goals for climate improvement. These first two steps have thus far been present in each previous process discussed. The next step Hoyle et. al suggested was for the principal to assist other administrators and teachers in establishing sound classroom management procedures. While working through this process Hoyle et al. stressed the importance of the principal setting a consistent example of leadership. They also indicated a strong need for the principal to demonstrate his/her belief in the strengths, talents, and good intentions of all staff members. The final step mentioned was for the principal to create an open communication network and keep abreast of professional and personal concerns and needs of the staff (p.11). As a final note to this process, Hoyle et al. stated that "a school leader's ability to influence policymakers, professional staff, and various publics is the key to designing and sustaining a school climate improvement

program" (p.12).

Hostrop (1990) discussed a list compiled by the Texas Education Agency which outlined six factors viewed as necessary for creating a positive school climate.

Although the list is one of factors, it could easily be changed to processes by adding the word create to each factor. The six factors are as follows:

- \*priority on academic learning
- \*orderly, businesslike workplace
- \*yet friendly and supportive
- \*clean, safe, comfortable environment
- \*open communication, involvement
- \*coordination, teamwork among teachers (p.273).

The themes of open communication and staff teamwork have been recurrent in many of the processes discussed thus far.

Continuing the review of the processes research provides for school climate improvement, Lezotte et al. presented six strategies for changing the school learning climate. The six strategies included reducing the threat of new programs to the staff. Rather than overloading the staff with the implementation of many new programs, it is more conducive to the school climate if programs are introduced gradually and at different times. Other

strategies included securing staff cooperation for climate improvement and identifying existing climate characteristics which are recurrent themes in other processes. Another strategy was to utilize the influence and skill of informal group leaders. It was also stressed that an important strategy was to plan for quick, visible success. A final strategy suggested changing instructional role definitions (p.74).

Wynne (1989)) concentrated on major themes that foster good school climate which can be used in a climate improvement plan. The following list gives detailed descriptions of each of the seven themes:

1. Encouraging persons sympathetic to the school's overall goals to enlist in the school environment, and keeping unsympathetic persons from enlisting or persisting.
2. Encouraging members of the school community to form into small, persisting groups, whose goals are congruent with the overall values of the school.
3. Maintaining a vital administrative structure for the overall school.
4. Recognizing that effective school operations require a continuous concern with the balancing of four elements: gratification,

industriousness, efficiency, and predictability.

5. Using appropriate combinations of aesthetic, ceremonial, and intellectual appeals to heighten the collective identity of community members.
6. Fostering activities- including systems of academic learning- that encourage the pursuit of collective goals by students and faculty members.
7. Recognizing that some of the means of pursuing good school climate are controversial. Effective pursuit requires judicious compromises, plus a willingness to engage where necessary, in tactful confrontation (p.249).

Wynne's suggestions are similar to others in that the principal needs to concentrate on building "buy in" with the staff for school climate improvement and use groups to achieve goals. Wynne also emphasized a point stressed by Bebermeyer and also the NASSP, that a change in school climate is a continuous process and change requires a great deal of effort.

Before synthesizing all of the plans discussed, it would be beneficial to review one final list of steps presented by Lemley (1987) which principals can use to help move an organization and its members toward accomplishing a set of goals which could cover an array

of topics such as curriculum, staff development, or climate.

1. Clearly define the limits and the constraints of jobs in the organization.
2. Make certain the members of the organization understand their jobs.
3. Define the school's mission clearly for the member of the organization.
4. Help the members of the organization understand what everyone in the organization does.
5. Encourage autonomy.
6. Provide a forum for the free and open exchange of professional ideas and concerns.
7. Provide the members of the organization with ample opportunity to make decisions.
8. Help the members of the organization develop friendships with others and with you.
9. Learn the value of reward systems.
10. Learn how to function as the cheerleader for the folks in the organization (pp.58-60).

Although Lemley's list does not refer specifically to climate improvement, it does lend itself to a climate improvement process. Many of Lemley's suggestions, such as clearly defined mission and everyone knowing what their responsibilities entail, are quite similar to processes previously discussed.

A principal desiring to improve the climate at his/her school site could choose any of the processes presented just as s/he could choose any of the assessment models available. Or, as in climate assessment, the principal could develop his/her own improvement model appropriate to the needs of the site. For this reason, this writer has synthesized the essential elements of the climate improvement process into a condensed outline (see Appendix A). A principal desiring to improve school climate could use the outline as a quick review or checklist of improvement processes. Regardless of which method a principal chooses, it is imperative that a principal have a plan and be prepared to put forth the necessary time and energy to accomplish that plan.

## Chapter Six

### Effect of Leadership Styles on Climate

Most research agreed that the principal is a necessary and highly influential force in school climate. Thus far, the principal's role in school climate improvement as it relates to climate understanding, assessment, and the development and implementation of an improvement plan has been reviewed. However, the role of the principal in climate improvement goes far beyond these elements to the very depths of the multi-faceted elements of leadership. In this chapter the principal as school leader and how s/he affects the school with leadership style and philosophy will be discussed. A 1981 ERIC Research Action Brief stated that the "one person in the school who has the most influence on the establishment of the environment that will produce achievement is the principal" (p.7). It is imperative to review specific strategies or leadership styles a principal can use to improve school climate.

Before discussing specific strategies a principal can use, it is important to understand why the principal is the key element in any school improvement process. The entire premise of this project is that leadership, specifically of the principal, is a crucial determining



factor of school climate. Research has shown that leadership behavior has an impact on such items as morale, productivity, turn-over rate, and efficiency. Leadership style in business, industry, and education under went a major change as a result of the Hawthorne Studies conducted by Mayo and Roethlisberger from 1927 to 1932. Mayo and Roethlisberger investigated the effects on workers at the Western Electric Company in Chicago if variables in their physical environment were altered. Through their observations, Mayo and Roethlisberger found that changes in the physical environment did not have a significant effect on worker efficiency and productivity. Instead, Mayo and Roethlisberger concluded that "what goes on inside the worker is more important to productivity than the outside conditions of the work itself" (Webb, Greer, Montello, and Norton, 1987, p.8). This study heavily refuted Fredrick Taylor's Scientific Management Theory. Management began to recognize the human element of employees rather than seeing them as a mechanical part of the organization. This idea has important implications for the principal desiring to create a positive school climate and an overall effective school.

The first decision a principal must make is to determine what s/he personally believes in and values. A leader

will act, respond, and lead according to his/her own beliefs. Research shows that "to be most effective, supervisors (leaders) must be aware of their personal assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values" (Daresh, 1989, p.36). The principal is generally the most visible individual at a site and as such they "...represent to many people, not only their personal value systems but also the orientation to the entire school or district" (Daresh, p.24). It is important that a leader make decisions in relation to a well thought out philosophy in order to guide the organization toward its vision of what it could and should be, rather than making decisions without a philosophy and no goal in mind. Daresh also emphasized that "without the capacity to reflect on the beliefs that form the basis of a personal educational philosophy, you will be unable to provide your staff and teachers with modeling and leadership to help them grow and develop in their own roles" (p.23). Once the principals have a clear understanding of their belief system they can choose a leadership style or styles that are in accordance with their personal professional beliefs.

The principal must realize that how s/he chooses to lead will have significant ramifications on the school

climate. The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) was previously discussed in relation to climate assessment. However, a review of Halpin and Croft's OCDQ would be beneficial at this time to compare the principal's leadership techniques to the resulting climate. The OCDQ measures eight factors, four pertaining to the principal, which have an impact on climate. The four behavioral factors of the principal are aloofness, production emphasis, thrust, and consideration. The OCDQ rates the principal as either high, medium, or low in each of the four areas. The four areas of the principal are then combined with the four areas related to teacher behavior to determine the climate of the school. The various combinations of the factors produce six different profiles of organizational climate. The six different profiles of organizational climate offered by Halpin and Croft are:

1. Open Climate: an energetic organization that is moving toward its goals while its staff members are satisfied in their personal social needs.
2. Autonomous Climate: an organization in which leadership emerges primarily from the group and the formal leader exerts little control over the staff members.
3. Controlled Climate: an environment that is impersonal and highly task-oriented.

4. Familiar Climate: a highly personal, but undercontrolled environment in which personal needs are satisfied, but little attention is paid to task accomplishment.
5. Paternal Climate: an organization in which the formal leader tries consistently to constrain leadership emerging from the group; the leader tries to do it all alone.
6. Closed Climate: an organization that demonstrates considerable apathy for all members (Daresh, pp.78-79.).

By examining the results from the OCDQ, the principal can assess whether or not his/her leadership behaviors are appropriate and if not, determine the changes to be made in order to achieve the desired climate. By reviewing the eight factors from the OCDQ and the six profiles of organizational climate, it is clear that the behaviors a leader chooses have a significant impact on the organizational climate which in turn has an impact on the overall school climate.

Sergiovanni (1990) discussed different leadership behaviors which he felt were important specifically for school improvement. His leadership styles were ordered in the following stages: Leadership by Bartering,

Leadership by Building, Leadership by Bonding, and Leadership by Banking. Although Sergiovanni's leadership styles were ordered into levels, he stressed that they could be used out of order and/or consecutively when the situation or audience made it necessary. Sergiovanni's stages of leadership styles were defined as follows:

Leadership by Bartering: Leader and led strike a bargain within which leader gives to led something they want in exchange for something the leader wants.

Leadership by Building: Leader provides the climate and interpersonal support that enhances led's opportunities for fulfillment of needs for achievement, responsibility, competence, and esteem.

Leadership by Bonding: Leader and led develop a set of shared values and commitments that bond them together in a common cause.

Leadership by Banking: Leader "banks the fire" by institutionalizing improvement gains into the everyday life of the school (p.23).

Sergiovanni's leadership styles are sub-divisions of two broad leadership types identified by James MacGregor Burns as transactional and transformative leadership.

Sergiovanni described Burn's leadership types in relation to his aforementioned leadership styles. "Transactional leadership focuses on basic and largely extrinsic motives and needs: transformative on higher-order, intrinsic, and, ultimately moral motives and needs" (p.23). Burn's was not alone in dividing leadership into two dimensions. Halpin and Winer divided leadership into two dimensions entitled initiating structure and consideration. Initiating structure is defined as the "behavior that delineates the relationship between the leader and members of the work group, and endeavors to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure" (Daresh, p.90). By definition, initiating structure is similar to Burn's transactional leadership. Halpin and Winer's dimension of consideration is defined as "behavior that indicates friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in the relationship between the leader and the staff" (Daresh, p.90). Consideration is quite similar to transformative leadership and is a cornerstone in building positive school climate.

Understanding the various leadership types and styles is an important step in a principal's plan to improve school climate. Research has shown that "different

leadership styles do indeed produce different behaviors" (Webb et al, p.9). Sergiovanni added more credence to the importance of understanding and using the appropriate leadership in his brief discussion of Amitai Etzioni's investigation of the moral dimension in management and motivation. Sergiovanni described Etzioni as believing that

what counts most to people is what they believe, how they feel, and the shared norms and cultural messages that emerge from the groups and communities from which they identify. Morality, emotion, and social bonds, he maintains, are motivators far more powerful than the extrinsic concerns of transactional leadership and the intrinsic concerns of the early stages of transformative leadership (p.23).

Clearly, transformative leadership is one tool a principal can use to meet the needs of the staff and build a positive school climate.

Similar to Sergiovanni's stages of leadership is Blanchford and Hersey's theory of situational leadership. Situational leadership has four stages of leadership identified as telling, selling, participating, and delegating. The goal of situational leadership is to move the organization or individual

from the telling stage to the delegating stage. However, an important aspect of this theory is that the stages can be used consecutively or out of order depending on what the situation demands. The stages are set on a grid in relation to high and low levels of task and relationship achievement. The leader is able to choose the appropriate stage for any given situation. The four stages of telling, selling, participating, and delegating are similar respectively to Sergiovanni's four stages of bartering, building, bonding, and banking. While a principal is using situational leadership it is important to remember the goal of positive school climate which is built and maintained at the higher stages of situational leadership.

Additional models of leadership exist which are analyzed in relation to people and task. One such model of leadership is Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid.

The Managerial Grid allows us to analyze leadership behavior in terms of both concern for people and concern for product, on a continuum of 1 (low) to 9 (high). According to Robert Owens (1987). Blake and Mouton make clear that 9.9 (high in both concerns) is the leadership behavior pattern likely to be most effective in most organizations to achieve the best results (Daresh, p.93).



The best results for the organization include both areas of people and production. Clearly 9.9 management would not only provide the best results in production, but 9.9 would also produce the best results in the area of concern for people. High results in the people area will in turn effect the climate positively. A principal can use the Managerial Grid as a style assessment tool. However, more importantly, a principal can determine his/her weaknesses and determine a course of direction for improvement in people and production. In so doing, a principal can also determine what direction needs to be taken in order for him/her to be a more effective leader in climate building.

Blake and Mouton clearly identified 9.9 management as the best leadership behavior, unlike Blanchford and Hersey's theory of situational leadership. Similar to Blanchford and Hersey, W.J. Reddin developed a theory of leadership which views "effective leadership behavior as a dynamic and situational, rather than static..."

(Daresh, p.95). Reddin's 3-D Theory of Leadership uses a perceived orientation of task and relations to distinguish from leadership behaviors. As the model in Figure 1 depicts, the Integrated quadrant is high in both task and relation just as Blake and Mouton's 9.9 management is high in both areas. Although Reddin did



schools and have made repeated attempts to isolate and define a particular type of leadership behavior unique to schools" (p.97). Instructional leadership is the leadership behavior used to specifically describe the direct and indirect leader behaviors that impact the school. Daresh classified "direct leadership activities as staff development and teacher supervision and evaluation, and indirect leadership as instructional facilitation, resource acquisition and building maintenance, and student problem resolution" (pp.97-98). Each of the categories has specific actions a principal does as part of instructional leadership. One major difference between instructional leadership and the previously discussed theories is that the aforementioned theories were compiled of different styles which maintained equality among the styles or specified one best style. On the other hand, instructional leadership is a combination of behaviors that are done either effectively or ineffectively. There is not a variety of styles to choose from in instructional leadership. Instead, the instructional leader is either effective or ineffective in fulfilling the various responsibilities.

Daresh listed examples of specific behaviors for each instructional leadership factor. By examining each of the factors, the relation of effective instructional

leadership to positive school climate can be shown. For example, one of the behaviors for resource acquisition and building maintenance was maintaining the "building to provide a pleasant working condition for students and staff" (p.98). This behavior clearly corresponded to the positive school climate factor of a safe and orderly environment. Hostrop cited six factors seen as necessary for an effective school-wide climate. One of the factors listed was a "clean, safe, comfortable environment" (p.273) which directly relates to the aforementioned example of resource acquisition and building maintenance cited by Daresh.

Another factor of instructional leadership given by Daresh was instructional facilitation. Daresh listed one example of instructional facilitation as establishing "priorities so that, the amount of time devoted to instruction is always first" (p.98). This specific behavior of instructional leadership correlated directly to another ingredient of effective climate cited by Hostrop as a "priority on academic learning" (p.273). Beare et al. also emphasized this priority when they stated that "the school climate is built around an expectation about learning" (p.18). While the principal is assuring a high expectation for learning, it is imperative that s/he models effective teaching.

"As the supervisor works with teachers to set up a healthy environment for learning, he must make himself a model for the teachers to emulate. The human element in the learning environment is crucial" (Unruh and Turner, 1970, p.130). Once again, it is clear that a principal desiring a positive school climate needs to be an effective instructional leader.

In connection with the instructional facilitation, an additional factor of instructional leadership listed by Daresh was staff development. While maintaining learning as a top priority, a principal needs to assure an appropriate staff development program for the school. In planning a year long program the principal needs to "work with a committee to plan and implement the staff development program" (Daresh, p.98). Research in the area of staff development indicates that principals should "look below the surface of their schools--at how their teachers are treated and what beliefs, norms, and values they share--and redesign their schools as learning environments for their teachers as well as for students" (Joyce, 1990, p.83).

The interrelatedness of a positive school climate and effective instructional leadership is further supported by comparing additional factors of instructional

leadership and climate. Another factor of instructional leadership was teacher supervision and evaluation. One behavior of teacher supervision and evaluation cited by Daresh was the involvement of "staff members and people from the community in setting clear goals and objectives for instruction" (p.98). This behavior is similar to an ingredient cited by Hostrop as "coordination. [and] teamwork among teachers" (p.273). If a principal wants a positive school climate, s/he needs to be sure the teachers feel empowered and have ownership for the instructional program of the school. Hostrop concluded that effective principals "sincerely praise and recognize teachers whenever they get an opportunity to do so. These actions create a positive self-image for the teachers, which in turn helps create a friendly and supportive school climate" (p.279).

In addition to the staff, the factor of teacher supervision and evaluation also included involving people from the community. One important community group to involve in setting clear goals and objectives is parents. Parents can be involved in a variety of ways, but the important factor is that parents are involved in a positive relationship with the school. Bedley cited one indicator of climate leadership as mobilizing "people to support programs by encouraging

and creating numerous alternatives to provide resources to meet organizational and people goals" (p.37). Keefe discussed a tool developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals to assess the school climate entitled Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE). The CASE listed nine scales of school climate with one of them being parents and community. The scale of parents and community was defined as "satisfaction with the levels of involvement and support provided by parents and community experts" (p.40). This relation with the community further relates effective instructional leadership and positive school climate.

The fifth factor of instructional leadership was student problem resolution. A major element of student problem resolution cited by Daresh was assisting "teachers in dealing with discipline problems" (p.98). The importance of a safe and orderly environment is continually referred to in research. For example, Hodges Persell and Cookson (1982) identified nine common behaviors of effective principals with one of them being "creating order and discipline" (p.22). Another study cited by Hostrop listed a "clean, safe, comfortable environment" (p.273) as an ingredient of effective school climate. The principal's role is not to assume

responsibility for all discipline actions, but instead to insure that the overall discipline program promotes a safe and orderly environment. The principal can do much to build a positive school climate by supporting and empowering teachers in their behavior management strategies. As Bedley indicated, climate creating principals need to "empower people to recognize they can solve their own problems by creating groups of problem solvers" (p.37). The people Bedley referred to included teachers, students, and parents. The principal's important role in student problem resolution and its effect on school climate cannot be overemphasized. In Keefe's discussion of CASE he listed one of the nine scales of school climate as student responsibility and discipline which was defined as "satisfaction with student conduct and disciplinary practices followed in the school" (p.38). Clearly, student behavior and disciplinary practices must not be ignored by principals attempting to improve school climate.

Various leadership theories, styles, and behaviors have been reviewed in relation to their effect on school climate. Instructional leadership clearly adapts itself to school climate improvement efforts. Any principal desiring to improve school climate would be wise to evaluate his/her ability as an instructional leader.



## Chapter Seven

### Conclusions

Although a principal may wish to deny or reduce his/her importance in and responsibility for school climate building, research is leaning toward the stand that the principal is the key element in the building and maintenance of a positive school climate. "Leadership style and motivation (coupled with organizational structure) appear to be basic building blocks of school climate..." (Owens, p.225). Rodriguez (1979) further supported this opinion by stating that

"the instructor believes, as many others do, that a school is only as good as its principal. The principal's words and actions, whether he [/she] is aware of the fact or not, are continuously setting the tone for his [/her] faculty, staff, students, and community. His [/her] body language often speaks louder than his [/her] words in setting the learning and working climate." (Hostrop, p.271)

Considering that others view the principal as a key element in school climate, it is imperative that a principal not overlook his/her role in school climate development.

As discussed previously, some leadership styles are more

effective in producing a positive school climate than others. However, in reviewing recent literature it is clear that instructional leadership is one form of leadership that is closely related to a positive school climate. Although a principal may not be able to function in every leadership style, instructional leadership is one style every principal can acquire. "Between 1975 and 1988, at least 65 original empirical studies in the English Language have provided evidence for the claim that instructional leadership is an achievable expectation for principals" (Joyce, p.74). In light of the fact that instructional leadership is an achievable expectation for principals, it is conceivable that a positive school climate is an achievable expectation as well.

The school's learning climate must always be in the forefront of the principal's mind. The principal must not only consider how each action and decision will effect factors such as instruction and safety, but also how every action and decision effects the school climate. Hoyle et al. stated that "the ways in which administrators behave establish a positive or negative school climate. How they manage time and resources and relate to other administrators, teachers, and students correlate with successful schools with open supportive

climates" (p.27). Principals must realize that although they may delegate portions of the climate improvement process, they cannot delegate climate improvement. Research has shown that "setting the school climate is an important responsibility of effective school principals" (p.273).

In sum, the principal cannot single-handedly establish and maintain an instructionally effective school learning climate; teachers, parents, and students must share this responsibility while principals must provide the needed leadership. But principals can almost single-handedly impede progress and improvement. (Lezotte et al., p.96)

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Appendix A  
Climate Improvement Process

I. Climate Assessment

- A. Establish a school climate team.
  - 1. Involve key staff members.
  - 2. Encourage "buy in" to improvement process.
- B. Determine type of information desired.
  - 1. satisfaction
  - 2. productivity
- C. Determine if any of the desired information can be obtained from available data.
  - 1. student achievement
  - 2. student attendance
  - 3. staff attendance
- D. Choose climate assessment instrument.
  - 1. observational instruments
  - 2. classroom interactions
  - 3. questionnaires
  - 4. Nonstandardized and Standardized Self Report Instruments
  - 5. self designed questionnaire
- E. Administer climate assessment instrument.
  - 1. include all audiences
  - 2. allow enough time and assistance



F. Organize data collected

1. Organize by climate factor such as safe, orderly environment, morale, etc.
2. organize by audiences
3. identify strengths and weaknesses

II. Develop a school climate improvement plan.

A. Review all important information

1. review data collected
2. review related research

B. Formulate specific goals and objectives

1. align with mission statement
2. Include statements of the school organization's socioeconomic purpose, shared values, and objectives.
3. develop a philosophy statement
4. continually publicize philosophy statement

C. Develop a plan to achieve the specific goals and objectives.

1. review research
2. develop plan
3. identify obstacles
4. assign tasks
5. establish a timeline
6. develop symbolic activities
7. address each goal and objective

8. show continued support for staff
9. make necessary plant changes
10. develop quality control standards

III. Implement plan for climate improvement.

A. Allocate necessary resources

1. time
2. money
3. personnel
4. materials

B. Allow staff to concentrate on climate improvement.

1. reduce threat of other new programs
2. publicize mission and philosophy
3. utilize influence of informal leaders
4. plan for and celebrate quick victories

C. Keep the implementation of the plan a positive experience.

1. utilize influence of informal leaders
2. plan for and celebrate successes
3. open communication
4. aesthetic, ceremonial, and intellectual appeals

5. symbolic activities

D. Monitor progress

1. monitor timeline
2. monitor assignments

#### IV. Evaluation

##### A. Evaluate progress

1. Assess whether or not goals and objectives are being accomplished effectively.
2. Assess if goals and objectives are being accomplished in accordance with the timeline.

##### B. Make any necessary changes

##### C. Celebrate successes